

Highlights from the 2021 Wall Street Women Forum

Be the CEO of Your Own Career

In this year's breakout session, *Be the CEO of Your Own Career*, our savvy panelists drew on their deep experiences to help you think strategically about your next steps in your career. Read some of the key points they shared below.



Anne Valentine Andrews

Managing Director,
Global Head of Real Assets
BlackRock

Everyone has a personal brand. It is made up of the words that people use to describe you when you are not in the room. What are those words? Are they the words you would like to hear about yourself or are they other words? I remember attending a Women's Leadership Forum and the host, who at that stage had been speaking on stage for a few hours, asked us to write down the first word that came to mind in describing her and scrunch up the paper and throw it onto the stage. She then bent down and picked each piece of paper up, and read out the words we had written down: "intelligent", "impressive", "knowledgeable", "smart" etc. She told us that many years before she had done the same thing and realized that a lot of the words people used to describe her were different words such as "upbeat", "cheery" and "cheer-leader". So she changed her style as she wanted to be taken more seriously.

It is important to know the words that get used to describe you. As an employee, every key decision about your career and progress is typically made when you are not in the room. Knowing those words is critical. I have often sought out those words to understand how I am perceived. I recommend that everyone does the same, and 360 feedback reports are very useful in this regard as well as asking trusted colleagues/friends. Knowing "your words" and therefore your own personal brand helps to build authenticity. This is something that can also be done before big presentations or meetings: write down the 3 words that you want to be remembered for after the presentation and it helps project those same qualities during it.

Best advice: *Do what you are doing and do it excellently: focus on being the best you can be in the role you are in and the rest will take care itself. Some people have the tendency to always be looking for the next thing, but in my experience it is best to execute well and in line with a vision and then success will follow.*



Mary Caracappa

Founding Partner & COO
Zenda;
Former Managing Director,
Morgan Stanley

What was your wake-up call? When did you shift from letting things happen to making things happen?

For me, it was my upcoming 30th anniversary at Morgan Stanley. I had worked in many different divisions and senior positions- the group I led at the time got realigned back to a division that I had left 15 years before. I didn't see the next role for me there. I started to feel like I was phoning it in. Most of my internal sponsors and mentors have now left the firm and/or had retired. The Firm, rightfully, was starting to position the next generation of leaders. I saw that I had limited amount of time left in my career to start something totally new. I was always a planner — but this time I decided to just pull off the band-aid without having a plan and made myself open to what the universe might bring.

What actions did you take to be the CEO of your own career? Tell us what you did and what the outcome was.

Once I gave notice of my intention to retire, I had a year to plan before I left my role. With a white sheet of paper, I started to think about new possibilities. I started to quietly talk to my network to think through possibilities.

I did the following:

- Met with previous sponsors/mentors
- Met with colleagues/peers/friends who were building their own business, including my current partners at Zenda, who then had built a company, Electronic Ink, that they were in the process of selling to CapGemini
- In the five years before I retired, I joined some NPB boards, to learn, to grow my network
- Met with fellow board members from the NFP boards
- Joined some organizations to help me there too — Board Next, Women Corporate Directors
- Let all know I was open to opportunities

Best advice: *You are always interviewing for your next opportunity. Always make time for building and maintaining your network.*